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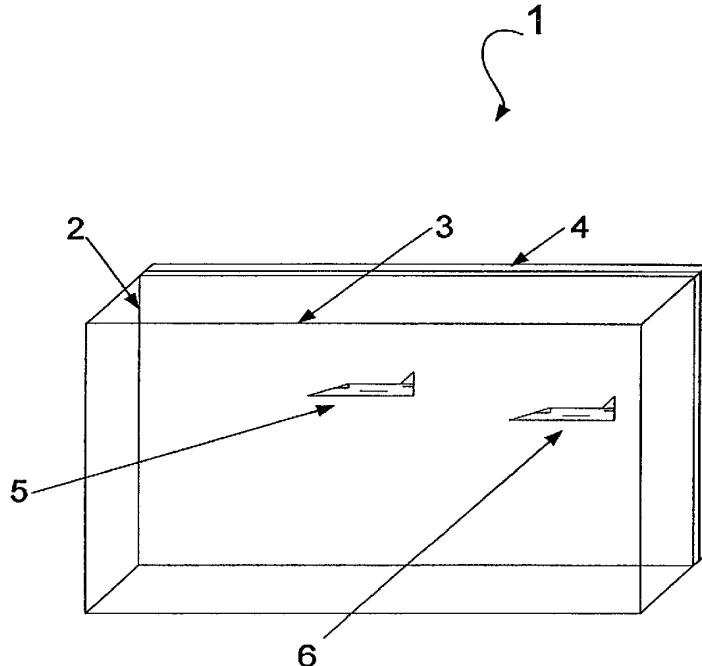
— with international search report

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: IMPROVEMENT TO INSTRUMENTATION



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(57) Abstract: A method of displaying information on an instrument for viewing by a user characterised by the steps of a) displaying information on a first focal plane, and b) moving the information displayed on the first focal plane to a different focal plane when an alarm or critical situation arises, and c) then moving the information back to the first focal plane, and d) repeating steps b) and c) in order that the viewer of the instrument becomes aware of the displayed information.



For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

5 IMPROVEMENT TO INSTRUMENTATION

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates generally to improvements to instrumentation.

BACKGROUND ART

- Any potential improvements in the input speed, comprehension and/or retention of information gained from viewing instruments would clearly be beneficial. This is particularly so where the instrument(s) relay critical information such as alarm conditions would be clearly beneficial to a wide spectrum of users, especially in situations where high speed decision making is necessary e.g.: pilots, or other military personnel, drivers, navigators, air traffic control etc.
- This is particularly important in situations such as alarm conditions or when critical parameters are being exceeded as any delay in comprehension of the situation can be catastrophic or even fatal in some circumstances. Currently the most effective way of bringing the viewers attention to these situations is by turning the information off and then on again to make it "flash". This flashing usually occurs on a visual display with a single focal plane."

The time taken for the viewer's brain to assimilate this information can substantially reduce the options available in some time-critical situations and any improvement in the speed of comprehension and hence response time would provide a great advantage in these situations.

- It is believed that use may be made of the viewers subconscious to enhance the recognised conscious reading mechanisms typically employed during the reading of computer screens, visual displays and so forth.

- 5 The manner in which human beings process visual information has been the subject of extensive and prolonged research in an attempt to understand this complex process. The term preattentive processing has been coined to denote the act of the subconscious mind in analysing and processing visual information which has not become the focus of the viewer's conscious awareness.
- 10 When viewing a large number of visual instruments, certain variations or properties in the visual characteristics of the instruments can lead to rapid detection by preattentive processing.

This is significantly faster than requiring a user to individually scan each instrument, scrutinising for the presence of the said properties.

- 15 Exactly what properties lend themselves to preattentive processing has in itself been the subject of substantial research. Colour, shape, three-dimensional visual clues, orientation, movement and depth have all been investigated to discern the germane visual features that trigger effective preattentive processing.

- Researchers such as Triesman [1985] conducted experiments using target and
20 boundary detection in an attempt to classify preattentive features. Preattentive target detection was tested by determining whether a target element was present or absent within a field of background distractor elements. Boundary detection involves attempting to detect the boundary formed by a group of target elements with a unique visual feature set within distractors.

- 25 It maybe readily visualised for example that a red circle would be immediately discernible set amongst a number of blue circles. Equally, a circle would be readily detectable if set amongst a number of square shaped distractors.

In order to test for preattentiveness, the number of distractors as seen is varied and if the search time required to identify the targets remains constant, irrespective of the

5 number of distractors, the search is said to be preattentive. Similar search time limitations are used to classify boundary detection searches as preattentive.

A widespread threshold time used to classify preattentiveness is 200-250 msec as this only allows the user opportunity for a single ‘look’ at a scene. This timeframe is insufficient for a human to consciously decide to look at a different portion of the 10 scene. Search tasks such as those stated above maybe accomplished in less than 200 msec, thus suggesting that the information in the display is being processed in parallel unattendedly or pre-attentively.

However, if the target is composed of a conjunction of unique features, i.e. a conjoin search, then research shows that these may not be detected preattentively. Using the 15 above examples, if a target is comprised for example, of a red circle set within distractors including blue circles and red squares, it is not possible to detect the red circle preattentively as all the distractors include one of the two unique features of the target.

Whilst the above example is based on a relatively simple visual scene, Enns and 20 Rensink [1990] identified that targets given the appearance of being three dimensional objects can also be detected preattentively.

Thus, for example a target represented by a perspective view of a cube shaded to indicate illumination from above would be preattentively detectable amongst a plurality of distractor cubes shaded to imply illumination from a different direction.

25 This illustrates an important principle in that the relatively complex, high-level concept of perceived three dimensionality may be processed preattentively by the sub-conscious mind.

In comparison, if the constituent elements of the above-described cubes are re-orientated to remove the apparent three dimensionality, subjects cannot preattentively

5 detect targets which have been inverted for example. Additional experimentation by Brown et al [1992] confirms that it is the three-dimensional orientation characteristic which is preattentively detected.

Nakaymyama and Silverman [1986] showed that motion and depth were preattentive characteristics and that furthermore, stereoscopic depth could be used to overcome 10 the effects of conjoin. This reinforced the work done by Enns Rensink in suggesting that high-level information is conceptually being processed by the low-level visual system of the user.

To test the effects of depth, subjects were tasked with detecting targets of different binocular disparity relative to the distractors. Results showed a constant response 15 time irrespective of the increase in distractor numbers.

These experiments were followed by conjoin tasks whereby blue distractors were placed on a front plane whilst red distractors were located on a rear plane and the target was either red on the front plane or blue on the rear plane for stereo colour (SC) conjoin tests, whilst stereo and motion (SM) trials utilised distractors on the 20 front plane moving up or on the back plane moving down with a target on either the front plane moving down or on the back plane moving up.

Results showed the response time for SC and SM trials were constant and below the 250 msec threshold regardless of the number of distractors. The trials involved conjoin as the target did not possess a feature unique to all the distractors. However, 25 it appeared the observers were able to search each plane preattentively in turn without interference from distractors in another plane.

This research was further reinforced by Melton and Scharff [1998] in a series of experiments in which a search task consisting of locating an intermediate-sized target amongst large and small distractors tested the serial nature of the search whereby the 30 target was embedded in the same plane as the distractors and the preattentive nature

5 of the search whereby the target was placed in a separate depth plane to the distractors.

The relative influence of the total number of distractors present (regardless of their depth) verses the number of distractors present solely in the depth plane of the target was also investigated. The results showed a number of interesting features including
10 the significant modification of the response time resulting from the target presence or absence.

In the target absence trials, the reaction times of all the subjects displayed a direct correspondence to the number of distractors whilst the target present trials did not display any such dependency. Furthermore, it was found that the reaction times in
15 instances where distractors were spread across multiple depths were faster than for distractors located in a single depth plane.

Consequently, the use of a plurality of depth/focal planes as a means of displaying information can enhance preattentive processing with enhanced reaction/assimilation times.

20 It is thus believed that a means of overcoming the above described drawbacks is available by harnessing the peripheral vision and subconscious perception of the reader to assimilate additional information sources simultaneously with the process of the conventional reading of the instruments in order to enhance the speed and effectiveness of the whole reading/viewing process.

25 This would have particular relevance to the displaying of alarm situations as this is when the time (or lack of it) in which to respond to the information on a display is most critical.

It is an object of the present invention to address the foregoing problems or at least to provide the public with a useful choice.

5 Further aspects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the ensuing description which is given by way of example only.

DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

According to an aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of displaying information on an instrument for viewing by a user

10 characterised by the steps of

- a) displaying information on a first focal plane, and
- b) moving the information displayed on the first focal plane to a different focal plane when an alarm or critical situation arises, and
- c) then moving the information back to the first focal plane, and
- 15 d) repeating steps b) and c) in order that the viewer of the instrument becomes aware of the displayed information.

According to a further aspect of the present invention there is provided an instrument for displaying information for viewing by a user, including

20 a visual display system including at least two single level screens spaced physically apart to form a multi-level screen, and

information on a first focal plane

characterised in that

when an alarm or critical situation arises the information displayed on the first focal plane will move to a different focal plane and then back to the first focal plane in 25 order that the viewer of the instrument become aware of the displayed information.

It should be understood that within the present specification the term "information"

5 may consist of alpha-numeric characters, symbols, plain text, images, a combination of the same or any other means of visually representing information.

In preferred embodiments of the present invention the information will be displayed on a multi-level three-dimensional display device such as that disclosed in New Zealand Patent Number 505800.

10 However this should not be seen to be a limitation on the present invention in any way as in other embodiments the information may be displayed on any display device that has more than one focal plane.

It is envisaged that within preferred embodiments of the present specification a control circuit will have access to a number of system parameters in order that when 15 a parameter goes beyond its specified level then the control circuit will signal to the display in order that the appropriate information displayed on the first focal plane will move to another focal plane and then back to the first focal plane so that the viewer will become aware of the displayed information and can therefore take steps to rectify the situation.

20 Preferably the movement of the information between focal planes is done a number of times – sufficient for the viewer to become aware of the displayed information.

It should be understood that throughout the present specification the term “alarm or critical situation” should be understood to mean when a system parameter is exceeded or an external influence has to be taken account of. For example, in a 25 military situation this could be the proximity of another object such as a plane, missile etc., or it can even be the receiving of a signal such as a radar-lock from a missile.

The techniques of making a viewer preattentively aware are described in the background art section of this specification and within this explanation it makes it

5 clear that moving information from one focal plane to another is a very fast and effective method for inducing preattentive awareness.

One of the extreme advantages of this technique is that the viewer need only have the information in their peripheral vision for the technique to be effective. This fact alone will vastly improve the reaction time to an alarm as when preattentive techniques are not used then the viewer generally needs to focus on the alarm information in order to comprehend its relevance or meaning.

10 According to another aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of displaying information for viewing by a user, including

at least two focal planes, and

15 a control system

characterised by the steps of:

- a) displaying primary information in a distinct colour or pattern on a first focal plane, and
- b) displaying secondary information in a distinct colour or pattern on at least a second focal plane, and
- c) when the primary and secondary information overlap or come into a proximity that is commensurate with an alarm situation the displayed information will change colour or pattern so that the viewer will become aware of this information.

20 25 According to yet another aspect of the present invention there is provided an instrument for displaying information for viewing by a user, including

a visual display system including at least two single level screens spaced physically

5 apart to form a multi-level screen, and

primary information displayed in a distinct colour or pattern on the first focal plane of the instrument, and secondary information displayed in a distinct colour or pattern on at least the second focal plane of the instrument,

characterised in that

10 when the primary and secondary information overlap or come into a proximity that is commensurate with an alarm situation the displayed information will change colour or pattern so that the viewer will become aware of this information.

It should be further understood that within the present specification the terms “primary information” and “secondary information” are not intended to infer or 15 suggest any hierarchical relationship or degree of relative importance between the primary and secondary information. In general the terms are used to disseminate between information on different focal planes within the display.

The term pattern is intended to mean a distinct configuration. For example, a first pattern may be a series of horizontal lines within the second pattern vertical lines. 20 The resultant new pattern formed by an overlap may be hatched grid indicating an alarm situation.

Preferably the information is represented by colour.

Due to the fact that the primary information and the secondary information are displayed on separate focal planes within the screen the area of overlap will 25 automatically be a combination of the two colours i.e.: the colour of the primary information and the colour of the secondary information.

This means that no special control or software will be necessary to change the colour of the overlapped area as the image on the second focal plane can clearly be seen

5 through the first focal plane as this is a transparent plane and therefore when the secondary information passes behind part or all of the primary information the colour of the image seen by the viewer will change accordingly.

- It is understood that in preferred embodiments of the present invention the colour of the primary information and the colour of the secondary information will be quite 10 distinct so as to form a new distinct colour when they are combined by an overlap of the information e.g.: if the primary information was yellow and the secondary information was blue then the overlapped area would clearly be green, this is an easily disseminatable colour from either yellow or blue and would therefore be easily and quickly recognised by the viewer.
- 15 In some embodiments of the present specification the instrument will be capable of using both of the described methods for displaying information, however this should not be seen to be a limitation on the present invention in any way as in other preferred embodiments only one of the methods will be able to be displayed on the instrument.
- 20 When an alarm or critical situation is detected by the circuits to which the instrument is connected the circuit will instruct the instrument to display the information as described, in order that the viewer of the instrument will be able to preattentively assimilate that an alarm or critical condition has been detected.

The most significant advantage of the present invention is that by using the 25 preattentive trigger described within this specification rather than just a flashing of the information (or a separate lamp) the viewer of the information will be able to assimilate the information or the condition more rapidly, which will in turn provide the viewer with a greater time in which to react to the situation.

It is accepted that with a lot of instruments the time in which the viewer will need to 30 react to the information being displayed will be sufficient for most normal methods

5 of relating the alarm situation to the viewer.

However, particularly for military and avionic applications the time in which a decision has to be reached, or remedial action needs to be initiated, can be incredibly short and any improvement to the viewer's reaction time or ability to assimilate the information more readily and rapidly will provide a distinct and possibly life-saving
10 advantage.

The present invention has many distinct and substantial advantages over any method available before, as stated previously the greatest of these is that due to the faster perception time to an alarm situation the remedial action can be initiated more rapidly which in turn will substantially increase the chance of the remedial action
15 being successful.

Another advantage is that in applications that currently use the separate alarm panel, by using the instruments disclosed within the present specification these panels will become obsolete therefore freeing up space in what is generally a confined environment.

20 A further advantage in these applications is that the viewer will have less areas in which to scan for relevant information and will therefore have lower fatigue levels than would presently be encountered.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Further aspects of the present invention will become apparent from the following
25 description which is given by way of example only and with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a simplified perspective view of a dual screen display operating in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention.

5 BEST MODES FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

With reference to Figure 1 there is shown an instrument containing a multi focal plane display generally indicated by arrow 1.

The instrument display 1 consists of a background screen (2) in a parallel orientation with, but spaced apart from, a foreground screen (3).

- 10 In Figure 1 both screens (2, 3) are transparent liquid crystal displays (LCD) panels, although the invention is not necessarily limited to the use of these displays.

A back light (4) is located behind the background screen (2) to provide illumination for the entire instrument display (1).

- Each of the screens (2, 3) are capable of displaying either primary (5) or secondary
15 (6) information.

Figure 1 shows the primary information (5) is displayed on the foreground screen (3) and secondary information (6) is displayed on the background screen (2).

- It should be appreciated however that the reverse situation is equally feasible with the
primary information (5) being displayed on the background screen (2) and the
20 secondary information (6) being displayed on the foreground screen (3).

It should also be appreciated that in a lot of applications only one piece of information (5, 6) will be shown on the instrument display (1). This information (5, 6) can be on either the background screen (2) or the foreground screen (3).

- When the displayed information (5, 6) reaches a critical parameter or "alert level" the
25 information will oscillate between the background screen (2) and the foreground screen (3) in order that the viewer will become preattentively aware that a critical situation is developing or has developed already.

5 In applications where both primary information (5) and secondary information (6) are present on the instrument display (1) either of the two methods of preattentiveness may be used.

For example:

10 a) When the primary information (5) and the secondary information (6) overlap or come into a proximity that is commensurate with an alarm situation the displayed information (5, 6) will change colour so that the viewer will be aware of this information.

15 Due to the transparency of the focal planes within the display, when the primary information (5) and the secondary information (6) overlap the combination of their colours will be displayed.

20 As discussed previously if the colours of the primary information (5) and the secondary information (6) are chosen carefully then the colour of the overlapped information (5, 6) would be obviously different to the viewer. The example mentioned earlier was if the primary information (5) was yellow and the secondary information (6) was blue then the colour of the overlap (5, 6) would be green.

25 b) If either the primary (5) or secondary (6) information reaches a critical or alarm level then the appropriate information (5,6) will oscillate between the background screen (2) and the foreground screen (3) thereby making the viewer preattentively aware of the situation.

Aspects of the present invention have been described by way of example only and it should be appreciated that modifications and additions may be made thereto without departing from the scope of the appended claims.

WHAT I WE CLAIM IS:

1. A method of displaying information on an instrument for viewing by user characterised by the steps of
 - a) displaying information on a first focal plane and,
 - b) moving the information displayed on the first focal plane to a different focal plane when an alarm or critical situation arises, and
 - c) then moving the information back to the first focal plane, and
 - d) repeating steps b and c in order that the viewer of the instrument becomes aware of the displayed information.

2. A method of displaying information for viewing by an user, including at least two focal planes, and a control system characterised by the steps of
 - a) displaying primary operation in a distinct colour or pattern on a first focal plane, and
 - b) displaying secondary information in a distinct colour or pattern on at least a second plane, and
 - c) when the primary and secondary information overlap or come into a proximity that is commensurate with an alarm situation the displayed information will change colour or pattern so that the viewer will become aware of the information.

3. An instrument for displaying information for viewing by an user, including a visual display system including at least two single level screens spaced physically apart to form a multi-level screen, and

information on a first focal plane
characterised in that
when an alarm or critical situation arises the information displayed on the first focal plane will move to a different focal plane and then back again
4. An instrument as claimed in claim 3 wherein the information will be displayed on a visual display system including at least two single level screens spaced physically apart to form a multi-level screen display device.
5. An instrument as claimed in either claim 3 or claim 4 that includes a control circuit which has access to a number or parameters for the system to which it is connected in order that when a parameter is, or goes beyond a specified level, then the control circuit will signal to the display in order that the appropriate information displayed on the first focal plane will move to another focal plane and then back to the first focal plane.
6. An instrument for displaying information for viewing by an user, including a visual display system including at least two single level screens spaced physically apart to form a multi-level screen, and

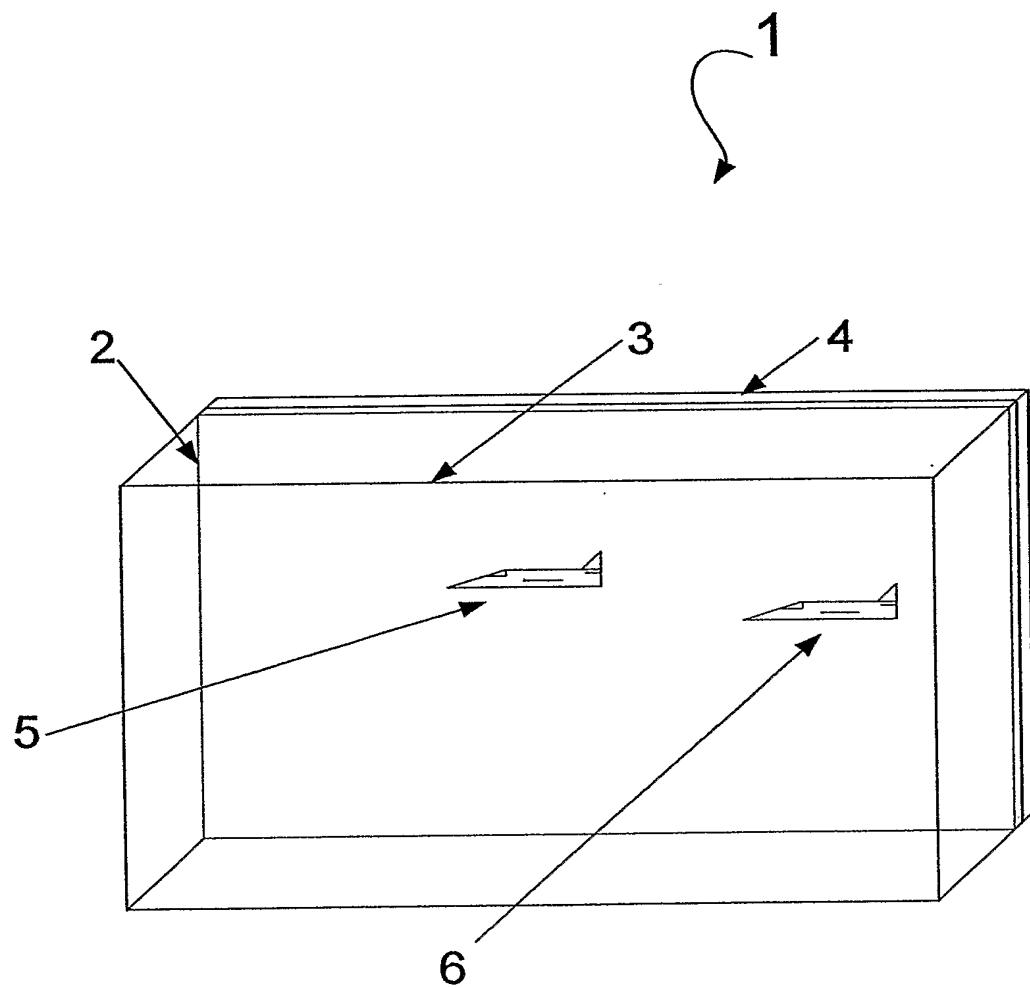
primary information displayed in a distinct colour or pattern on the first focal plane of the instrument, and
secondary information displayed in a distinct colour on at least the second focal plane of the instrument

characterised in that

when this primary and secondary information overlap, or come into a proximity that is commensurate with an alarm situation, the displayed information will change colour or pattern so that the viewer will become aware of this information

7. An instrument as claimed in any of claims 3 to 6 wherein the colour or pattern of the primary information and the colour or pattern of the secondary information will be quite distinct so as to form a new distinct colour or pattern when they are combined by an overlap of the information.
8. An instrument as claimed in any of claims 3 to claim 7 that is configured so as to be capable of using both of the methods for displaying information disclosed in either claim 1 or claim 2.
9. An instrument substantially as herein described with reference to an as illustrated by the accompanying drawing.
10. A method of displaying information on an instrument substantially as herein described with reference to an as illustrated by the accompanying drawing.

FIG 1



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/NZ02/00175

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

Int. Cl. ⁷: G02B 27/22, G09F 19/12, G02F 1/1347

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
ECLA: G02B 27/22V1

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
USPTO, DWPI (IPC: G02B 27/22, IPC: G09F 19/12, focal plane, image plane, viewing plane, layer, superimpose, superpose, depth, display, head up)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 5,198,936 A (STRINGFELLOW) 30 th March 1993 the whole document	1-10
A	WO 01/01290 A (CRAWFORD et al) 4 th January 2001 the whole document	1-10
A	US 4,333,715 A (BROOKS) 8 th June 1982 the whole document	1-10

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C

See patent family annex

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"E"	earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"L"	document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"O"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&"	document member of the same patent family
"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed		

Date of the actual completion of the international search
25 October 2002

Date of mailing of the international search report **30 OCT 2002**

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/NZ02/00175

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 5,113,272 A (REAMEY) 12 th May 1992 the whole document	1-10
A	EP 1 093 008 A (ELOP ELECTRO-OPTICS INDUSTRIES LTD.) 18 th April 2001 the whole document	1-10

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/NZ02/00175

Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. Claims Nos :
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. Claims Nos :
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:

3. Claims Nos :
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a)

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 3 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

- Claims 1, 3-5 and 7-10 are directed to a method for displaying information in which critical or alert information is alternated between two depth layers of the display.
- Claims 2 and 6 are directed to a method for displaying information, wherein proximity of information on two depth layers of the display causes a colour change of the information.

Although the claims feature in common a two-layer display arrangement, this feature is well known in the art. Therefore, the claims lack unity, à posteriori.

1. As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims
2. As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.
3. As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:

4. No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest

The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.

No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/NZ02/00175

This Annex lists the known "A" publication level patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The Australian Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

Patent Document Cited in Search Report				Patent Family Member			
US	5198936	US	5361165				
WO	200101290	AU	200062011	US	6438515		
US	4333715	US	4294516				
US	5113272	CA	2075807	EP	515533	WO	9112554
EP	1093008	NO	20005178	PL	343229		
END OF ANNEX							